

Too Many Babies?

by Joseph Hansen

**A Marxist answer to some
frightening questions:**

- **Is a "population explosion"
the world's main danger?**
- **A planet too crowded
to stand on?**
- **Will mass sterilization
help stamp out hunger?**

PIONEER PUBLISHERS

25c

Too Many Babies?

By Joseph Hansen

| | |
|--|----|
| America Faces a New Enemy | 2 |
| The Peril Mounts to Our Way of Life | 7 |
| Can the Enemy Be Stopped? | 11 |
| A Brand New Foe Finishes Malthus | 18 |
| An 1844 Argument Still Waits Reply | 26 |
| The Real Cause of "Overpopulation" | 30 |
| A "Man-made Plague" | 39 |
| Hunger Disappears in World of Future | 43 |

Pioneer Publishers
116 University Place
New York 3, N. Y.



America Faces a New Enemy

A number of eminent dignitaries and scientific authorities have been seeking to arouse a lethargic public to a new menace — an enemy of formidable character, perhaps the most dangerous America has yet faced.

This enemy is insidious. He is not armed with H-bombs, rocket missiles, deadly nerve gases, nuclear submarines, tanks, submachine guns, rifles or even bayonets. He uses none of the weapons to which we have become accustomed and which Congress can handle by passing appropriations. This enemy's major means of attack is nothing but a mouth and, at a certain stage, a set of teeth.

This seeming paucity of instruments of destruction should not lead one to underestimate the new foe. He employs ultra modern methods of warfare. Without a formal declaration of hostilities, he simply moves in, often by surprise. He takes over sometimes with amazing rapidity. He uses infiltration and subversion, boring into the American home from within, counting as his allies in these treacherous techniques the most respectable people, our doctors, nurses, mothers and fathers.

This enemy has already occupied the cribs, nurseries and playgrounds of America.

Lest this sound like war hysteria, let me quote from an article that appeared under the headline, "‘BUMPER BABY CROP’ HELD THREAT TO U.S." Here is the warning about this advancing horde which Prof. William A. Paton of the University of Michigan uttered before the House Ways and Means Committee Nov. 30, 1959:

"Our continuing bumper baby crop, coupled with present tendencies both to prolong the period of childhood and provide for earlier retirement, have added greatly to the difficulty of maintaining our present per capita living standard, to say nothing of an increase. The essential factor at this stage is capital formation."

Dead right! What America needs is a lot more dollars, not babies. We must never forget what's precious.

And if you tend to think that the difficulty in maintaining our standard of living might be due to inflation, to the cost of wars we've fought and are going to fight, to the insistence on an ever higher level of profits, or to

some old-fashioned strikebreaking and union-smashing — better get your head examined. The real trouble is our “continuing bumper baby crop.”

Another weighty authority goes even further. According to Raymond B. Cowles, Professor of Zoology at the University of California, Los Angeles, the danger concerns not only America but the entire human race. And he is afraid that it is already too late.

Prof. Cowles' startling message was sent over the UPI teletypes to every major newspaper in the country Jan. 2, 1960. It appeared in the press in the following succinct statement: “that men multiply at a geometric rate while food production can only be increased at an arithmetic rate.”

UPI did not report what experiments with runaway human fertility the learned zoologist had performed to reach this frightening scientific conclusion. Perhaps the government slapped down tight security regulations. But UPI did report the professor's gloomy prediction:

“As a naturalist I can come to only one conclusion which is that no rational solution can be achieved in time to avert disaster to both wildlife and man himself.”

It is not clear whether Prof. Cowles meant that geometric man would end up eating everything arithmetic, including wildlife, and then perish from famine; or whether it would be a disastrous race between geometric man and an equally geometric wildlife for a common supply of arithmetic food. The final picture as the curtain descends seems, nevertheless, depressingly clear — man and cockroach in countless billions on a barren earth fighting cheek to jowl for the last crumb.

This geometric business may seem too complicated and abstruse to bother about. A fatal error! It happens to be the foe's secret weapon. Robert C. Cook, president of the Population Reference Bureau, for instance, sought to arouse America to the peril with the declaration that present rates of population growth are “as ominous a threat to mankind as the H-bomb.” We had best approach the deadly geometric ratio with respect and seek some military intelligence about it.

One person who has acted as a true public servant should, in a question of such grave consequences, is Richard C. Bradley, Assistant Professor of Physics, Cornell University. He wrote a letter to the editor of the New York Times.

Here are some extensive quotations from this admirably lucid missive:

"Take the world population at mid-century (about 2,000,000,000), take the present doubling rate (once every fifty years), and project the population indefinitely into the future. We see that by the year 2000 there will be 4,000,000,000 people, by the year 2050 there will be 8,000,000,000, and so on. Before ten centuries will have passed, our descendants can count on having 200,000,000,000 neighbors — which is slightly more than the number of square feet of land surface on earth, including the South Pole, the Sahara Desert and Mount Everest."

Don't smile. That reveals nothing but a refusal on your part to face reality. If you won't heed now, just "sit tight for yet another thousand years" and see what happens. As Prof. Bradley notes, having wisely anticipated the probable reaction of the ignorant and the light-minded; "there will then be 2,000,000 people per square foot."

That ought to bring you up short. What do you propose to do with that problem in your lap? Try to jam 2,000,000 people into one square foot? Obviously, you'll agree, it would be physically difficult, not to speak of the objections you'd get from the 2,000,000. Therefore, you've got to make more room. How? Prof. Bradley says that a member of Congress, described as a "student of space," suggested that the extra people could be shipped off to other planets. "Let's look at that," the physics professor coolly suggests:

"Just to maintain the present status quo we would have to export 100,000 persons each day (present daily net increase). Assuming each person weighs 150 pounds and is permitted to carry an additional fifty pounds of food, clothes and knickknacks, we find that the daily cargo comes to about 10,000 tons — approximately the weight of a Liberty ship."

Why this expert on population explosion thinks we should send valuable food, clothes and knickknacks into outer space along with the excess humans is not clear. A Freudian might ascribe it to an unconscious streak of humanism that broke through to the surface. Fortunately it was not strong enough to block the stream of scientific thought:

"The Congressman would do well to get his bill approved soon, for if it is delayed fifty years (while people ponder where to get enough fuel for this program or where to find a habitable planet) the daily cargo will have increased to 20,000 tons."

Clearly we face an enemy of baffling nature. He seems

to have breached our defenses in such subtle fashion that we are scarcely aware of the swiftly mounting danger. High time that our best minds began grappling with the immensely difficult problem of what to do!

It is debatable whether the quality of thought devoted to this problem is in proportion to the quantitative level. However, before we consider some of the representative contributions, we should perhaps note that although the perplexing riddle was stumbled upon some time ago, it did not acquire great public urgency, at least in the United States, until quite recently; in fact, not until 1959 when the race for the White House began to warm up.

Then it took a form somewhat novel in American politics. Each presidential candidate in the news was abruptly required to state publicly what he thought about the government fostering public enlightenment on contraceptives and the granting of money from the U. S. Treasury to help the rest of the world use them.

A presidential committee headed by Major General William Draper, which had been set up to study U. S. foreign aid, suggested in July 1959 that the government should assist poor countries in programs to cut down their birth rate. The use of public funds for such purposes was denounced by the Roman Catholic Bishops. Since one of the prominent presidential aspirants of the Democratic party, John F. Kennedy, happens to be a Catholic he was compelled to state his views. He did this with adroit equivocation, as did the other leading candidates. >

In this way the problem of what to do about preventing the population from spilling off our planet a thousand years from now became mixed with an issue of quite different character — the fundamental human right of everyone to scientific information about birth control and medical assistance in its practice.

The distinction between the two issues, however, was obscured in the furor that hit the press, and some curious mixtures of reactionary nonsense and sage advice made headlines.

For instance, Pope John XXIII condemned the "erroneous doctrines and the pernicious and death-dealing methods" of birth control. In the same breath he maintained that the right solution to the problem of hunger — hunger for food, not sex — is a "better distribution of earthly goods." This, he said, could be accomplished by

putting the wealth that is produced at everyone's disposal.

The Pope's conclusion about hunger follows with admirable precision from his premises. To place society's wealth at the disposal of everyone would certainly signify a better distribution of goods. Unfortunately God's vicar did not indicate by what means other than socialism this highly desirable goal might be achieved on earth. Certainly it would seem to take more than failure to practice birth control, no matter how consistent, to win an economy of abundance.

Sharp answers to the Roman Catholic position appeared with commendable promptness. A typical one was made by John T. Edsall, Professor of Biological Chemistry at Harvard University. He sought to pin the pious Bishops down to the real issue; that is, what do we do a thousand years from now?

In a letter to the editor of the New York Times he argued that emigration to less crowded areas is out. This had been suggested by the Vatican's American spokesmen. In 150 years, Edsall pointed out, some sixty million people emigrated from Europe to America. "Today, however . . . the population is increasing by some fifty million each year. . ." If emigration is impractical and you exclude birth control, how can you keep the population down? "A general nuclear war might put a quick end to this and other human problems," he observed gloomily, "but no sane man would welcome this hideous solution."

The specialist in biological chemistry lamented that medical programs which lower the death rate "actually serve to increase the sum total of human misery. . ." If you sought to argue to the contrary, Edsall would still resist being persuaded. Despite abundant food, future generations might be better off unborn:

"Even if we find the means to support a population of ten or twenty billions on this planet, do we want such a world? I believe that the best spiritual development of mankind requires open space, access to wild nature, and other precious things that go with a relatively uncrowded world."

So we come to a position lurking in much of the argumentation over population: It might be best in the long run to return the plains to the buffalo, give Manhattan back to the Indians and all go back to where we came from.

Here are some other typical declarations that serve to indicate how deeply the question has stirred public interest. The Rev. Dr. Zev Zahavy, an Orthodox rabbi, said:

"By what right does this generation take upon itself the task to decide who may propagate and who may not propagate? Birth control on a communal scale is anti-Godly. . . .

"If these people are sincerely concerned with the problem of human survival, then they should be shouting for salvation from the effects of atomic radiation and fall-out."

William Esty, an avowed atheist and former research director of the Planned Parenthood Association of America, responded to the Roman Catholic position with these words:

"The church's attitude toward the uses of sex in marriage is an appalling Procrustean bed which reminds me of Orwell's 1984 with its state-approved 'goodsex' and state-punished 'badsex.'"

This atheist view appeared to be shared, perhaps not inconsistently, by a leading Protestant, Dean John C. Bennett of the Union Theological Seminary. He denounced the "rhythm method" of birth control. This practice was approved by Pope Pius XII since it does not involve the use of mechanical contraceptive devices. Dean Bennett complained:

"There are enough problems in marriage without having this one." In his opinion, the requirement in the rhythm method for periodic continence deprives marriage of one of its goods.

Bishop James A. Pike, the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California, took a more open-minded, if somewhat pragmatic, attitude to the question. He challenged the federal government to initiate a "crash program" to perfect the rhythm method of birth control.

The challenge, made over a nationwide TV broadcast, "The Population Explosion," was accepted the very next day by a spokesman of the National Institute of Health, a federal agency. "If a lot of scientists think more research is needed into the rhythm method, they may get in touch with us." Applications, it was announced, will be referred to an advisory committee for consideration and recommendation.

The Peril Mounts to Our Way of Life

The efforts to arouse the public to do something about preventing the human race from multiplying too fast have not been favored with much success. Even the prediction of a planet so crowded that standing room will be at a premium does not seem to have struck home. Somehow

it seems unrealistic to worry about having to elbow the camel and dromedary aside in the Sahara a thousand years from now, about vying with eagles for perches in the Himalayas and competing with the penguins for living space on the Ross ice shelf. It even seems implausible that the swarm of babies will become so great that like a plague of locusts they will devour all available food.

A number of authorities seem to recognize this weakness in our psychological defenses against the human baby and have therefore sought to shore them up by showing how the new foe threatens all we hold dear. The Hugh Moore Fund, for instance, in a free pamphlet, "The Population Bomb," considers human fecundity in relation to war, peace and communism:

"Hundreds of millions of people in the world are hungry. In their desperation they are increasingly susceptible to Communist propaganda. . . .

"U. S. taxpayers cannot feed the world. And much as we would wish to help the earth's hungry millions we cannot even dent the problem with dollars. . . .

"Today the population bomb threatens to create an explosion as dangerous as the explosion of the H bomb, and with as much influence on prospects for progress or disaster, war or peace.

"But while the H bomb is only being stockpiled, the fuse of the population bomb is already lighted and burning. Every day adds 135,000 people to the population of this planet. . . .

"No time is to be lost. The peril mounts daily. Our way of life, if not the actual existence of ourselves and our children, is at stake."

Margaret Sanger, the noted advocate of planned parenthood, who has fought for decades for the public's right to free access to birth-control information and birth-control devices, wrote in a letter to the editor of the New York Times:

"Birth control, family planning and population limitation are most important in any effort to bring real peace in the world. Less population will bring less war. Fewer people means more peace."

We cite this not to discredit the good work Margaret Sanger has done in fighting against reactionary views and reactionary laws on birth control, but to show how the "population explosion" question is being brought into current economic and political issues. The late Dr. Antoinette Konikow of Boston, who pioneered in America in the fight for a progressive attitude toward birth control, would have

taken issue with Margaret Sanger's belief that fewer people necessarily means more peace. Dr. Konikow, one of the founders of the Socialist Workers party, held to the Marxist position that the causes of war are economic. She also subscribed to the Marxist view on the population question. We will consider this view later.

Lawrence Fertig, a Scripps-Howard columnist, voiced an opinion widely held among capitalist economists:

"Economists disagree on the solution of many important economic problems in the world today, but there is one subject on which there is nearly unanimous agreement. That is the premise that overpopulation is the greatest threat to economic progress and the maintenance of political stability in most of the world today. This issue cannot be avoided or pushed under the rug."

If babies constitute the "greatest threat" to economic progress and political stability, it would indeed seem inadvisable to sweep the issue under the rug. We had better focus major attention on it. Fertig even suggests an authority we might profitably consult among the economists: "The tendency for populations to outrun the food supply was brilliantly discussed over 160 years ago by the Rev. Thomas Malthus in his famous Essay on Population." We will follow that suggestion after surveying the views of today's authorities.

Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher, chief obstetrician at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York, says in a book he just published:

"Reckless population growth without parallel economic growth . . . makes for a constant lowering of the standard of living. Such a decline, with its concomitant mounting poverty and hunger, leads to political unrest."

"Today that kind of unrest inevitably delivers a population to some ism, whether it be communism, fascism or Pan-Arabism, and weans them away from democracy."

It's amazing that modern babies, if born in sufficient quantities, should be inclined to easy weaning away from democracy and toward some ism, including Pan-Arabism, but the head obstetrician of Mt. Sinai Hospital must have helped bring a lot of them into this world and therefore the authoritativeness of his view seems beyond question.

Moreover, he is not alone in his conclusions. Joseph J. Spengler, Professor of Economics at Duke University, would agree, at least in part:

"What I'm afraid of is, if India, for instance, doesn't do something, it will become filled with people with aspirations for a much better life whose expectations won't be met. What

will they do? They very likely will turn to the Communists or to some group that believes in a highly centralized state, which the Communists might in time take over.

"The immediate danger in India is that private and public enterprise can't improve economic conditions rapidly enough if population continues to grow rapidly. Many people will come to feel frustrated, and this will play into the hands of the Communists."

Another eminent authority sees even grimmer possibilities. Robert C. Cook, president of the Population Reference Bureau, thinks "nothing is more important to the future of the human race than world-wide understanding of the dangers inherent in too rapid population growth." He continues:

"Failure to curb this growth in underdeveloped countries will gravely impair economic development. Unless living levels improve substantially, economic, social and political deterioration will be followed by chaos and greater misery."

"Democracy could not possibly survive such a debacle."

Greater misery, famine, the end of democracy, the triumph of communism, war, chaos — these are what stare us in the face if we don't succeed in getting the underdeveloped countries to cut down on births. That's the way an impressive number of authorities size it up. It would be one-sided, however, not to note a dissident opinion.

Mrs. Helen Dorsey, president of the Dorsey Company, reports that the business of supplying the immediate needs of babies passed \$4,000,000,000 in the United States in 1959. Future prospects, she thinks, are even brighter. She predicts that the current average spending on each child during the year will amount to \$1,000.

It can be argued, of course, that this is a slap-happy outlook due to prejudice. The Dorsey Company happens to be the country's largest manufacturer of plastic baby wear.

However, more objective experts can be cited. Richard Rutter takes a rosy view in the New York Times:

"What does the population 'explosion' portend for the national economy? Overseas, it should mean a tremendous opportunity for investment, especially in underdeveloped areas . . .

"Back home, the impetus to the economy from the sheer addition of numbers may prove even more dramatic."

Rutter submits that this is not solely his individual opinion:

"There seems little doubt that — barring a major international war — the growth in population will largely dictate

the course of the economy. Already, the economists and other observers are referring to the forthcoming decade as, variously, 'The Soaring Sixties,' 'The Golden Sixties,' 'The Fabulous Sixties.' Glowing forecasts are being made by the sheaf-full."

A lot of problems must be solved beside the little one of avoiding a major international war, Rutter admits. "But, as of now, at least, the consensus is that the problems will be solved — with far-sighted planning as the key — and that the Sixties will be genuinely an era of spectacular growth and prosperity."

One wishes that Rutter had told us more about how to achieve the planning that is the key to handling the rising population; unfortunately he ran out of space and was barely able to mention it in his last paragraph.

Such optimists, it must be emphasized, are decidedly in the minority.

Can the Enemy Be Stopped?

What can be done to stop babies from making any further inroads on mankind? Some of the best minds in the capitalist world are working around the clock on this fateful problem. Time is of the essence. If the foe manages to keep up his present frightening rate of birth and our death rate remains stagnant, by the year 3960 this small planet will have a population of 2,000,000 per square foot. All the experts agree that this would be too crowded.

A way to prevent such catastrophic piling up of humans was suggested by Stephen Enke, Professor of Economics at Yale University. In a paper read at a meeting of the American Economics Association, this learned representative of capitalist thought proposed that underdeveloped countries cut down on babies at once by giving cash bonuses to married couples who practice birth control.

This could be done, Professor Enke held, by paying husbands who requested sterilization and wives who did not become pregnant for long periods of time.

A seeming barrier to this angle is the poverty of the underdeveloped countries. The obstacle, however, might not prove insuperable. Congress, which has learned admirable alacrity in handing out tens or hundreds of billions of dollars from the public treasury for deadly nerve gases, H-bombs, atomic pig boats and similar Christian paraphernalia, might be persuaded to offer a generous sub-

sidy to married couples in benighted lands who could prove sterility.

A January 16 dispatch in the New York Times describes experiments in India along these lines. The Central Government, writes Paul Grimes from Bangalore, "has urged the states to provide for male sterilization." This laudable propaganda has been accompanied by deeds. "Special surgical facilities have been established." In New Delhi, the Home Ministry even decided to allow government employees as much as six working days off if they agreed to use the time to get themselves sterilized.

"Yet the results have not been encouraging. Available physicians and qualified aides are hard to find. Even if each clinic handled the 60,000 persons it was designed to serve, five out of six Indians would still have no facilities."

A moral question came up, too. In Madras social workers had been paid two rupees (40 cents) "for each man they induced to be sterilized. . ." Lamentably, in seeking more rupees, they often persuaded men to submit to the operation "without impressing on the patient that sterilization meant he could never father children again."

In contrast to this somewhat discouraging field report, the previously cited pamphlet, "The Population Bomb," takes an optimistic view:

"Male sterilization — vasectomy — is a simple procedure. One American surgeon writes: 'It may be done easily, rapidly and painlessly. The patient walks in, walks out and goes about his affairs. No after-care is necessary, no hospitalization.'"

We are assured, in addition, that "It does not affect sexual relations adversely and is not to be confused with castration."

People burdened with an inclination to criticize in a carping way — and what sin is greater than that? — may point to the fact that mass sterilization of male humans is advocated only for underdeveloped countries, not the United States, and that this is much like the "master race" business in Nazi mythology about sterilizing the Jews. The criticism shares the fault common to such one-sided picking of flaws; it overlooks what the true experts really advocate. The population problem is "unrelated to color, race or geographical location," explain the authors of "The Population Bomb." "It could apply to the United States if our population were outstripping our resources. . ."

Sir Charles Darwin, grandson of the Darwin of evo-

lutionary fame, has done much to outline the scope of the inquiry that should be made into the population problem.

In an interview in U.S. News & World Report, he held that the main immediate danger from the hordes of babies now being born is that they are "black" or "yellow." The long-range peril from his point of view is, of course, even more ominous. Having eliminated such natural checks on population as famines, plagues and wars of high mortality, "we're responding just the way the rabbits did in Australia."

"Man is an animal, and, however much food is produced, there will always be too many mouths asking for it."

The foresighted grandson of Charles Darwin believes that a good birth-control device for use on a world-wide scale is "the best economy for the human race you could possibly get."

"But you've got to have an educational system. You've got to teach a billion — at least a billion — grown-up people how to use it. Well, how many men can a man educate? A thousand, something of that kind. You've got to have over a million teachers just to show people how to use this. You can't get that going in 50 years. So it's out."

The entire current birth-control program is in a blind alley! That's Sir Charles' startling discovery. The natural stupidity of men was overlooked and along with it the staggering problem of educating them to see that their first duty to the human race is to learn how to use a good birth-control device and to never forget it at the critical moment.

Such a discovery might dismay a scientist of lesser stature. But not Sir Charles. Fresh approaches must be tried!

"I would like to have a system of taxation — and it would have to be stuck to for a century or so — in which the richer you are, the more inducement you have to have children."

That might be an exciting contest, the rich whites in this world trying to outspawn the poor whites and all the blacks and yellows. But wouldn't such a race play into the hands of the foe we set out to conquer? Sir Charles is no idiot. He dismisses the proposal as unrealistic. "I don't think you'll ever get it the way political opinion is going now. . ."

Can the surplus population be sent to other planets? Our eminent authority believes not. You've got to have

a reasonable temperature, plenty of water and oxygen. Have you got these on other planets? No. So that's out.

"What effect do you think a nuclear war would have?" asked Sir Charles' interviewer. Darwin's grandson gave this the benefit of his full powers of thought:

"I don't know, but there is the point that people quite rightly talk about the horror of nuclear war and say that the whole of New York might be blotted out or the whole of the Eastern States of the United States might be blotted out.

"This would be the greatest catastrophe ever, but it doesn't solve the problem. What does it mean — 100 million dead? One hundred million are replaced in three years. You've got to have a war like that every three years, you see. You must keep to arithmetic on this thing."

This would seem to end any hope of keeping down the population. If you can't sweep back the tide by dropping an H-bomb in a populated area every three years, our wily new foe would seem to be invincible. However, one avenue does remain open:

"There, of course, is also the danger of one possibility: If you went and destroyed the whole human race, that certainly would solve the population problem."

That's a joke our generation can readily appreciate. In this modern world, which has advanced so far from the insecurity of the cave, we need never feel nervous about our rulers doing something like that. And if they do, we can rest assured it will be done in the best interests of the human race.

A less drastic solution, which experts like Sir Charles Darwin might well consider, is one offered by an amateur, Pakistan's ruler Ayub Khan. He is reported by Time magazine to have "sighed" one day:

"If our population continues to increase as rapidly as it is doing, we will soon have nothing to eat and will all become cannibals."

We do not seem to have made much headway in the antibaby campaign. The experts have succeeded only in demonstrating that they know of no means which in practice will lower the birth rate sufficiently to save our planet from being overwhelmed by humans within two thousand years. Doomed to less than standing room — that seems to be our fate.

About all we have discovered is that prominent capitalist authorities on population favor keeping women infertile by sterilizing their husbands on a mass scale — in

poverty-stricken countries, that is, not rich ones, at least for the present. We have discovered, too, that some of them take a racist attitude. If there must be babies, they prefer white to colored ones. Some display class bias, holding to the innate superiority of those born to wealth; and most of them think the production of great masses of human beings leads to political unrest, revolution and an eventual world-wide communist victory.

Before passing on, sadder and not much wiser, it might be well to pay a call on the authority whom so many population experts tip their hats to, the Rev. Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834). It could be that the neo-Malthusians are not doing justice to their prophet's theories. Let's check a sample statement from the original:

"The cause to which I allude, is the constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it . . .

"It may safely be pronounced, therefore, that population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years, or increases in a geometrical ratio . . .

"It may be fairly pronounced, therefore, that, considering the present average state of the earth, the means of subsistence, under circumstances the most favourable to human industry, could not possibly be made to increase faster than in an arithmetical ratio.

"The necessary effects of these two different rates of increase, when brought together, will be very striking . . .

"Taking the whole earth, instead of this island, emigration would, of course, be excluded; and, supposing the present population equal to a thousand millions, the human species would increase as the numbers 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256; and subsistence as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. In two centuries the population would be to the means of subsistence as 256 to 9; in three centuries as 4,096 to 13, and in two thousand years the difference would be almost incalculable."

Sound modern? Even ultra modern? You might, of course, take an opposite view with some justification — our atomic-age editors seem to be push-overs for anything in knee buckles and a powdered wig. It would seem fitting, however, to avoid such a disrespectful attitude; and, instead, extend to the Reverend the benefit of a modern approach such as his modern views deserve.

Psychoanalysts should find the good parson of considerable interest. A curious blank exists in his sex life. It appears that he did not engage in this common field of human endeavor until his marriage at the age of 39. Not that he was ignorant of what the birds and the bees and people do. It was just that his primary interest was to keep

the population down. To accomplish this laudable aim, he advocated "moral restraint" and he really seems to have been one to practice what he preached.

His relation to his father might likewise be worth psychoanalytical probing. Daniel Malthus, although a "gentleman of good family and independent fortune, of considerable culture," was a fellow-traveler of the French Revolution. In fact a Parliamentary Un-British Activities Committee might easily have proved that he was Jacobin-minded.

For instance, among the friends of Daniel Malthus was Jean Jacques Rousseau, a notorious French advocate of the theory that government should be based on the consent of the people.

Daniel Malthus also associated himself with the ideas of Condorcet, a pamphleteer of the French Revolution. Antireligious, anti-Christian and antiroyalist, Condorcet contributed to the *Encyclopedie* edited by the materialistic Diderot. The human race, Condorcet held, had advanced to enlightenment, virtue and happiness from a condition not superior to that of other animals. He argued that from the history of the past we can get an indication of the pattern of the future. His view was optimistic and sunny; in time, he believed, inequality of nations will be destroyed, as will inequality between classes. He also believed that human nature is capable of indefinite perfectibility, intellectually, morally and physically.

As if such subversive views were not enough, Daniel Malthus associated himself with the ideas of William Godwin, a British firebrand who declared, "God himself has no right to be a tyrant." Once a Calvinist, Godwin became converted to the materialist views of the *Encyclopedists*. He denounced accumulated property as a monstrous injustice, maintaining that property should be available to any who need it. He considered marriage the worst of all legal institutions. Government, he believed, is inherently evil and will eventually be outgrown. Godwin had great power of influencing men, especially "enthusiastic young people, who hung on his words as those of a prophet." Among his disciples he counted the renowned poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, an avowed atheist, who eloped with his daughter. (Mary was a talented woman, whom Hollywood should immortalize in the pavement at Sunset and Vine as the author of *Frankenstein*.)

Young Tom Malthus found his father's subversive background rather painful. However, instead of turning bitter, as might have been expected, or developing neurotic symptoms, he took a healthy fighting stance which the American Legion might have approved. He set out to convince his father that revolutionary views are utopian. Not having much of an original mind, he dug around among old books and publications until he came up with a set of arguments which he thought would shake anyone. These he fitted together in a manuscript.

Whether Daniel Malthus was really bowled over by the dusty arguments, or felt a kindly paternal interest in Tom's career, he encouraged the 32-year-old lad to publish the manuscript. The resulting pamphlet in 1798 was an instant success. British ruling circles considered it a dazzling answer to the subversive ideas about liberty, fraternity and equality emanating from the French Revolution.

Britain's rulers took the youth's argument as confirmation of their view that it is harmful to seek a better society. If human nature is such that population will always outstrip the food supply, the poor and hungry will be with us forever, since it is obvious that you can't change human nature. It is, moreover, futile to help the poor. Indeed, charity is harmful, for it encourages them to reproduce.

The Encyclopedia Britannica (thirteenth edition) offers this objective judgment of the reception given Malthus' pamphlet:

"It can scarcely be doubted that the favor which was at once accorded to the views of Malthus in certain circles was due in part to an impression, very welcome to the highest ranks of society, that they tended to relieve the rich and powerful of responsibility for the condition of the working classes, by showing that the latter had chiefly themselves to blame, and not either the negligence of their superiors or the institutions of the country. The application of his doctrines, too, made by some of his successors had the effect of discouraging all active effort for social improvement. Thus Chalmers 'reviews seriatim and gravely sets aside all the schemes usually proposed for the amelioration of the economic condition of the people' on the ground that an increase of comfort will lead to an increase of numbers, and so the last state of things will be worse than the first."

From the same source we learn that not much confidence can be placed in Malthus' propositions:

In the conceptions of Malthus and his followers, "a single social imperfection assumed such portentous dimensions that

it seemed to overcloud the whole heaven and threaten the world with ruin."

The "celebrated proposition" that "population increases in geometrical, food in an arithmetical ratio" has been "conclusively shown to be erroneous, there being no such difference of law between the increase of man and that of the organic beings which form his food."

In brief, the theory of Malthus was simply part of the reactionary propaganda fostered by the vested interests of the time as a check, not against population growth, but against the spread of the French Revolution. The revival of the Malthusian view today is best appreciated against the background of the upheavals which began with the October 1917 Revolution in Russia.

Malthus himself thus turns out to be no more help to us in beating back the phalanxes of the world's babies than his distinguished disciple Sir Charles Darwin. We seem to have an enemy that is truly invincible. With 100,000 new recruits a day donning the uniform of the diaper and the safety pin, it looks like nothing will be left in our refrigerators soon except the chromium trim.

How long will it be before famine sets in? This shouldn't be hard to figure out. Yet, strangely enough, the most devoted modern-day advocates of Malthus' views seem reluctant to predict even an approximate date when cannibalism can be expected to begin. Why is this?

The truth is that a careful check of our food supply leads us to an amazing discovery.

A Brand New Foe Finishes Malthus

The human proclivity to reproduce will inevitably bring us to famine and perhaps standing room only on our planet, according to the Rev. Malthus and his followers. Before getting morbid about having to pay for our lack of "moral restraint" in this cruel way, let's get a report from the food experts on how long we can continue without thought of the future like the improvident grasshopper in Aesop's fable.

Brace yourself for a pleasant surprise. No famine is in sight, at least in the United States. In an article "Chemical Revolution on the Farm," published in the New York Times Magazine Oct. 4, 1959, William Barry Furlong reports: "That revolution has all but wiped out the Malthusian fear that a nation would never be able to feed an ever-expanding population."

Who would have imagined it? The Malthusian fear has been all but wiped out! Let that be a lesson on the folly of taking the capitalist population experts seriously. This, however, is only the beginning. Furlong continues:

"When Thomas Malthus first uttered his dreary doctrine of despair in 1798, the United States had a population of five million persons and more than enough food to feed them. Today it has a population of 177 million persons — and more than enough food to feed them. In fact, the food keeps piling up, higher and higher, despite the abnormal demands of two wars in recent years, despite the fact that some 1,800,000 farms have disappeared in the last twenty years, despite the fact that about a million acres of farmland every year are turned into highways, housing developments and factories."

Take a look at those facts again. It's a real bomb so far as the Malthusian theory is concerned. According to Malthus, population expands at a geometric rate, food at only an arithmetic rate. But the facts cited by Furlong show that even if you give the pessimistic parson the benefit of the doubt on population, he was dead wrong about food. Since 1798 the supply in the United States has increased at a higher rate than population, despite wars, the disappearance of farms, and the loss of a million acres of farmland a year!

Does that sound unbelievable after the dire forebodings and grim warnings which we have been hearing from the Malthusians? Furlong gives us still another set of figures to confound those who maintain that the supply of food cannot be increased at better than an arithmetic rate:

"About 1850, four farmers could produce enough food for five persons. By 1940, one farmer could produce enough food for ten persons. Today one farmer can produce food and fiber for twenty-four persons."

Malthus had everybody scrounging for food, except the rich, yet he saw famine as inevitable. Today, 161 years later, one farmer can produce enough for twenty-four. How did the worthy Reverend happen to land so far off the target? First of all, Malthus left out the effect of the industrial revolution. We needn't blame him for that since it really got rolling after his time. On top of that he left out what he couldn't possibly have foreseen, the chemical revolution — the use of manufactured plant nutrients, pesticides and additives such as vitamins, hormones, enzymes, antibiotics and so on. How could the prim young Bible student of 1798, whose real aim was to prove that the ideals of the

French Revolution were utopian, have anticipated a statement like this 161 years later by Furlong:

"Thus the chemical revolution has increased farm capacity more in twenty years than the mechanical revolution did in almost 100 years."

Had he foreseen this, Malthus would have been forced to admit from his own premises that liberty, fraternity and equality are perfectly practical goals despite that tricky mathematical ratio on food and population which the French revolutionaries failed to consider.

Later we will consider the Malthusian theory more closely from the Marxist point of view but let us first continue our inventory, again citing Furlong:

"Last year the total acreage of farmland under cultivation was the smallest since 1918, yet farm production was 11 per cent higher than any previous record. The wheat and corn crops were so huge that they threatened the entire concept of price supports. The Federal Government has about \$2,500,000,000 tied up in stored wheat. It has about \$1,800,000,000 invested in surplus corn and is paying \$370,000 a day just to store more than a billion bushels of it."

If you think that's impressive, Furlong reports that some experts hold "that farm production can be stepped up as much as 85 per cent over its present record-breaking levels simply by using the knowledge now available."

Because statistics are always rather dry, people tend to hurry through them. Did you notice something about those last two paragraphs that jarred just a little? Something about wheat and corn crops being so huge that they "threatened" us in some way or other? And something about the threat getting 85 per cent worse? Having discovered that the Malthusians were wrong about an exploding population soon eating us out of house and home, is it possible that we are faced with a different disaster; namely, a food explosion? What if the present rate of expansion of the food supply were to keep up for two thousand years!

Before getting trapped with that one, let's try another authority. Here's a Washington dispatch by William M. Blair that appeared in the Jan. 11, 1960, New York Times:

"As American agriculture enters the Nineteen Sixties, the revolution shaking the foundation of its traditional patterns shows no signs of slackening . . .

"The output of the country's agricultural plant continues to outrace the 'population explosion.' During the Nineteen Fifties farm output increased 2.25 per cent a year. Population growth speeded up, but only at the rate of 1.8 per cent a year. In short, as of now, the total output of farms is beating a

rapid rate of population growth by something like one-half of 1 per cent a year."

Our sudden suspicion was not a symptom of an incipient persecution complex but a sensitive response to a real danger. Babies may not be our enemy after all. With their millions of voracious mouths they may turn out to be allies. Perhaps we should consider following the example of our own government, sign a peace treaty with the enemy and begin picturing babies as one of us, doughty comrades in arms in a war against corn and wheat.

The true foe is obviously food. The scare over how swollen the population might become two thousand years from now diverted us from the real menace facing us right today — the torrents of wheat and corn that have broken through the dams on the farms and are now rushing down on us at frightening speed. As alert members of the Civilian Defense we had better snap to attention and study more carefully those deceptively dry statistics.

Preliminary figures from the Department of Agriculture indicate, William M. Blair reports, that capital invested in farming "increased about 8 per cent in the last decade while output expanded by 25 per cent." A trend like that is something to think about; but hear this:

"There have been phenomenal increases in yield per acre. The rise of 2.25 per cent a year in production during the Nineteen Fifties compares with the one-half of 1 per cent in the Nineteen Twenties.

"The yield-per-acre increase for major crops ranged from 20 per cent to 75 per cent over the last decade. Corn alone, and this crop accounts for one-fourth of the total production, increased by more than 35 per cent in yield per acre."

Such a food explosion obviously spells ruin. Work on farms "dropped from 24,000,000,000 man-hours in 1920 to 11,000,000,000 in the year ended Dec. 31." Despite that heroic slash in labor, corn and wheat still gushed upon us in an ever-rising flood.

What has happened to the unfortunate farmers caught in the path of corn and wheat? In 1958 there were 4,700,000 farms. Within two years the figure had dropped to 4,100,000 "or even as low as 3,900,000" and the rural population is shrinking. The conclusion is inescapable — our farmers are being suffocated by their own crops.

"Thus," as William Barry Furlong puts it, "the immediate prospects are not for famine but for continued abundance — and the problems, especially the crop surplus, that go with that abundance."

Small wonder that "in the United States Treasury's counting rooms, sweat breaks out on the men who watch the expanding abundance of the chemical age."

What's to be done about the food explosion? There are two schools of thought. One holds that hunger still plagues the world and that America should help stamp it out.

As a modest beginning at home, we should assure every family three square meals a day. This elementary public-welfare measure would not decrease our immense surpluses. In fact it would probably ultimately help increase them because of the rise in the sense of well-being among the people.

As a beginning abroad, we should at once offer flotillas of food to poverty-stricken countries, thus helping to restore the good name America formerly enjoyed among nations for its readiness to use its plenty to help others in need.

This generous attitude is rather widespread among farmers and workers but doesn't get many headlines.

The other school holds that such a view is fat-headed, pinko-tinged, smacking of un-Americanism, and strictly for the birds. Hunger, this school will admit, is an unpleasant fact. However, not much can be done about it without cash in your pocket or in the bank. Overwhelming evidence shows that modern man's main reason for growing crops is not to provide people with food; but to make money. If you give our crops away, how can you expect to sell them? You've ruined the market. To protect profits you have to protect sales and keep prices high enough to offer a fair return.

This view is so sensible that we at once see its merit. To preserve the profit pattern in agriculture, we must maintain relative scarcity. Obviously the current food explosion is a national calamity.

Fortunately our capitalist experts are aware of the grave character of the emergency and are working around the clock figuring out what to do. A report on their efforts which appeared in the Dec. 14, 1959, Wall Street Journal shows that there are no grounds for panic:

"A broad attack on the nation's huge, costly agricultural surplus problem is being launched by America's leading farm organizations.

"Convinced that the old panaceas won't work, the organizations are concocting a flock of new ones. Their most urgent aim: To wipe out the Government surplus of wheat.

corn and other major crops which now ties up more than \$9 billion. Removing this surplus, the farmer groups believe, would allow free market prices to rise to 'fairer' levels."

Anyone who thinks that it would be unfair to jack up food prices any higher than they are now, should ponder the following bit of information from the same article:

"Spurring farmers is a pinch on their own pocketbooks, reflected in Government statistics. At mid-November, the prices farmers received were at the lowest point in more than 19 years in relation to the prices they pay. This year, farm profits are running about 15% below 1958, and economists predict that next year they'll dip to the lowest rate since 1942."

From this we can see that it's only common sense to pour kerosene on that \$9 billion worth of food stored by the government. If that would create too much of a fire hazard, the grain could be bull-dozed into the rivers where we dump our sewage. We've got to break out of the horse-and-buggy kind of thinking that considers it a government duty to keep the granaries full for the lean years. This is bounteous modern America, not the ancient Egypt that suffered the famines of Biblical times!

A bold move of this kind to remove the depressant effect of government-held mountains of food would have exhilarating consequences on prices and profits. Much more than that is required, however. If the present rate of agricultural production continued, the flood of edibles and fibers from our farms would quickly fill up the emptied storehouses again. You have to strike at the root of the evil. You have to get the farmers themselves to serve as shock troops to put down production.

The government, of course, has been working on this for some time. To help keep up prices, it buys crops from farmers, using part of the tax money it takes from us for this worthy purpose. We pay for the crops that have to be taken off the market so that we can enjoy higher prices at grocery stores. That is how the government surpluses have been built up.

Along with this, however, the government has insisted that farmers help, too, by restricting the acreage they put into production. Many big farmers, as a result, make millions by generously refraining from growing crops. Under Eisenhower, still another measure was instituted, the so-called "soil bank." Under this, farmers agree to take soil out of production. In return, the U.S. Treasury, again using

money taken from us in taxes, pays them rent for the idle land.

The main trouble with the government's efforts is that they haven't worked. They proved to be too meager to contain the food explosion. Some of them are now regarded as nothing but panaceas, the report in the Wall Street Journal indicates.

The administration's plan is "to counter surpluses" by a more vigorous extension of current policies. This would include "gradually lowering price supports, expanding the voluntary soil bank, helping more marginal farmers find urban jobs, boosting overseas surplus disposal and finding new industrial outlets for farm products."

Among wealthier farmers a lot of consideration is being given to the idea of turning to the use of force. Let the government clamp down on every farm in the country with a specific limit on the amount of any major crop which each one is permitted to grow. On top of this, let the government extend the soil bank scheme and make it mandatory. As a crash beginning, take 50 to 70 million acres of the country's 350 million acres of crop land out of production at once.

This would effectively counter the present inclination of many farmers to scorn the soil bank, or to put the worst land on the farm in it. It would also scotch their tendency to grow bigger crops on smaller acreage as a way of getting around the government's effort to reduce crops by lowering the amount of land in production.

Opposition among farmers to such vigorous steps could be met in two ways. On the one hand, it would be made a serious crime, like bootlegging, to grow unauthorized food; on the other hand, farmers who curbed their instinct to plant seeds, cultivate crops and reap harvests would be guaranteed free government grain for their livestock and government checks for themselves to cover whatever losses they encountered because of curtailed sales. You know who would foot the bill.

The Wall Street Journal calls these "new concepts." Who can be against "new concepts" in such a critical problem? Before joining the claue, however, with our own cheers, whistles and bravos, let us pause for a moment of silent meditation.

Remember how we were told that the rise in productivity on the farm "has all but wiped out the Malthusian

fear that a nation would never be able to feed an ever-expanding population"? Remember how shocked we were to learn that what we really face is not the danger of over-population in one or two thousand years but a food explosion of immediate threat to the profit system? Now we have discovered that a series of government panaceas have already been applied to cut down agricultural production, but without success, so that more strenuous ones are suggested.

On thinking it over, doesn't all this have a familiar ring? Doesn't this fear of expanding crops parallel the fear of an expanding population? And what about the panaceas proposed to keep down corn and wheat? Aren't they variations of Malthusianism — with this difference, that the "dreary doctrine" is applied to crops instead of people?

The destruction of government-held surpluses—doesn't such a proposal arise from fears of abundance just as antihuman as those the warmaking imperialists display toward the huge populations of the countries like China and India?

Crop reduction — isn't that like the neo-Malthusian panacea of reducing the birth rate of the peoples of India, Latin America, China and similar poverty-stricken areas?

Retirement of soil — doesn't this parallel the sterilization of males and maintenance of infertility among females advocated by the neo-Malthusians for colored populations that have yet to reach the exalted industrial status of the Western powers?

From the admissions of the population experts themselves, we saw how ridiculous it is to expect that their utopian schemes will seriously affect the human birth rate. Can anything better be expected from trying to apply similar measures to the land to stem the immensely productive consequences of the industrial and chemical revolutions?

To be brief and brutally frank about it, the best that can be said for both sets of proposals is that they are worthless except for what they reveal about the level of capitalist thought in our times. Face to face with the mighty problems of abundance to which the capitalist system has brought us, our experts have nothing better to offer for our consideration than some frightened rattling of the sacred bones of St. Malthus.

Clearly, if we hope for any clarity, we must turn to better sources.

An 1844 Argument Still Waits Reply

The food explosion, whatever fears it may have aroused about our being suffocated by corn and wheat, has proved how baseless were the fears of the Malthusians that the growth of population will eventually doom humanity to famine. This may still be news to the modern disciples of the gloomy parson of 1798. It is not news to Marxists, as the record will show.

Sometime in 1861-63 Karl Marx copied from the introduction to the "Origin of Species" the following acknowledgment by Charles Darwin: "In the next chapter the Struggle for Existence amongst all organic beings throughout the world, which inevitably follows from the high geometrical ratio of their increase, will be treated of. This is the doctrine of Malthus, applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms." Commenting on this, Marx with a single devastating sentence detached that portion of the parson's anatomy sticking above his starched collar:

"In his excellent work, Darwin did not see that his discovery of the 'geometrical' progression in the animal and vegetable kingdoms overturns Malthus' theory."

Marx then shook the parson gently to show that his head had really been relieved of its customary connection:

"Malthus' theory is based precisely on the fact that he opposed Wallace's geometrical progression of human beings to the chimerical 'arithmetical' progression of animals and plants. In Darwin's work, for example in his discussion of the extinction of species, we find a natural-historical refutation of the Malthusian theory, not only of its fundamental principle but also of its details."

This refutation, a century old, is, we see, of the same type we noted in the food explosion now worrying the Department of Agriculture — the facts demonstrate that the progression of animals and plants is not arithmetical as the Bible student of 1798 imagined it to be.

On the level of theory, Frederick Engels had already refuted Malthus years before the appearance of the "Origin of Species." In 1844, at the age of 24, he offered a solution to the population-food riddle that still sounds completely modern. Let's give young Engels the floor. (As in the previous quotation, our source is the selections published by Ronald L. Meek under the title "Marx and Engels on Malthus.")

"[Under the competitive conditions of capitalism] a stage must ensue in which there is so much superfluous productive power in existence that the great mass of the nation has nothing to live on, so that people starve to death from sheer abundance. England has already been in this crazy situation, in this truly absurd condition, for a considerable time. If the fluctuations of competition become stronger, as they necessarily do in such a state of affairs, then we have the alternation of prosperity and crisis, of overproduction and stagnation. The economists have never been able to understand this crazy state of affairs, so in order to explain it they thought up the theory of population, which is just as nonsensical, indeed, even more nonsensical, than this contradiction of the coexistence of wealth and poverty."

The main point to be noted in this approach is that Engels takes the population as a **whole**. The Malthusians isolate the poor from the population, certainly an arbitrary procedure, and then seek to explain the poverty of this segment on the basis of its size. This is obvious nonsense. Engels, on the contrary, takes the rich and poor sectors of the population as they really are, a living, interrelated combination. A "crazy state of affairs" is at once apparent. In the midst of abundance, part of the population goes hungry. It is self-evident to Engels that this is due not to the quantity of the poor but to the quality of the economic system in which they live — it dooms people to starvation in the shadow of bursting granaries and warehouses. Engels continues with his answer to the Malthusian fear that humanity will eventually produce too many babies for the food supply:

"For us the explanation of the matter is easy. The productive power at the disposal of mankind is immeasurable. The productivity of the land can be infinitely increased by the application of capital, labor and science."

To back this view, Engels cites calculations of the time indicating that Britain's production of wheat could be increased enough within ten years to support six times the population of 1840. Looking farther into the future, he declares:

"Capital increases daily; labor power grows together with population; and science masters natural forces for mankind to a greater extent every day. This immeasurable productivity, administered consciously and in the interests of all, would soon reduce to a minimum the labor falling to the lot of mankind . . . "

Engels considers the Malthusian theory a "vile and infamous doctrine," a "repulsive blasphemy against man

and nature," the "immorality of the economists in its highest form."

"Now the consequence of this theory is that since it is precisely the poor who constitute this surplus population, nothing ought to be done for them, except to make it as easy as possible for them to starve to death; to convince them that this state of affairs cannot be altered and that there is no salvation for their entire class other than that they should propagate as little as possible; or that if this is not practicable, it is at any rate better that a State institution for the painless killing of the children of the poor should be set up — as suggested by 'Marcus,' — each working class family being allowed two and a half children, and the excess being painlessly destroyed. The giving of alms would be a crime, since it would encourage the growth of surplus population; but it would be very advantageous to make poverty a crime and the workhouse a corrective institution, as has already happened in England under the new 'liberal' Poor Law."

Engels does not dismiss the Malthusian theory as utterly useless. He credits it as a "necessary transitional stage" which had the effect of drawing attention to the "productive power of the soil and of humanity, so that now, having triumphed over this economic despair, we are forever secure from the fear of overpopulation."

In this optimistic conclusion we must admit that Engels displayed overconfidence in the power of correct theory to rid people of fears. As we know from the current scare stories in the press, quite a few eminent figures still exhibit neurotic anxiety in relation to the growth of population. Engels was even willing to grant a small kernel of truth to the Malthusian view:

"From this theory we derive the most powerful economic arguments in favor of a social reorganization; for even if Malthus were altogether right, it would still be necessary to carry out this reorganization immediately, since only this reorganization, only the enlightenment of the masses which it can bring with it, can make possible that moral restraint upon the instinct for reproduction which Malthus himself puts forward as the easiest and most-effective countermeasure against overpopulation."

Summarizing his position, Engels considers the central calculation upon which Malthus based his whole system — that population increases in geometrical, food in arithmetical progression:

"The difference is obvious and horrifying — but is it correct? Where has it been proved that the productivity of land increases in arithmetical progression?"

Engels then advances arguments that sound as if they were written in the light of the "chemical revolution" which has brought an enormous increase in agricultural production in the United States in the past two decades:

"The area of the land is limited — that is perfectly true. But the labor power to be employed on this area increases together with the population; and even if we assume that the increase of output associated with this increase of labor is not always proportionate to the latter, there still remains a third element — which the economists, however, never consider as important — namely, science, the progress of which is just as limitless and at least as rapid as that of population. For what great advances is the agriculture of this century obliged to chemistry alone — and indeed to two men alone, Sir Humphry Davy and Justus Liebig? But science increases at least as fast as population; the latter increases in proportion to the size of the previous generation, and science advances in proportion to the body of knowledge passed down to it by the previous generation, that is, in the most normal conditions it also grows in geometrical progression — and what is impossible for science?

Engels thus makes three central points: (1) Under capitalism the distribution of hunger in the population is not due to the abundance of the poor but to poor distribution of society's abundance. (2) Wealth can be increased without limit if society is so organized as to bring about the most effective combination of labor power and science. (3) Even if Malthus had a point in the sense that society sometime in the distant future might have to regulate the size of the population, this could not be accomplished under capitalism but only under the planned economy of socialism.

We can judge the power of these arguments from the incapacity of the Malthusians to answer them. To this day they have not done much more than to point with alarm to the long-exploded "mathematical" puzzler advanced by Malthus. They sound like a tape recording that repeats over and over a 1798 weather report predicting possibly disastrous floods within a couple of thousand years.

Still, as Marxists, we must admit that the young Engels in 1844, however telling his arguments, did not advance a scientifically grounded position. For a truly scientific handling of the subject we must turn to the major work in which Engels later collaborated with Karl Marx, "Capital."

The Real Cause of "Overpopulation"

Up to this point, we have accumulated facts about population and food; we have listened to arguments from the Malthusians and their opponents; but we have not yet considered whether the growth of population, like other phenomena open to examination, is determined by objective laws, and if so what the laws are. Ascertainment of the laws should end the dispute. In a different field, for example, Kepler's discovery that the planets follow ellipses in their orbits effectively disposed of centuries-old arguments on the preference of believing they follow perfect circles. Karl Marx made a similar contribution to science in relation to the study of population.

Since the scientific character of Marxism has been challenged frequently enough by its foes, let us pause for a moment on this point. Marx held that human societies, like everything else in the universe, evolve. They develop from simple, primitive forms to more complex ones.

In their main sequence, the forms follow a definite historic order. This order is determined in the final analysis by the development of the means of production — technology and the way it is applied in taking care of mankind's basic needs. Each mode of production, therefore, has its own special laws of population, "historically valid within its limits alone." The population of a food-gathering Indian society living under the primitive communism of stone-age times in America was determined by a quite different set of laws from those governing the highly industrialized capitalism of our day in the same area. To determine these laws is, consequently, a matter of competent investigation and generalization of the findings.

Once we know the population laws of a given mode of production, we have a firm basis for prediction. We can tell by and large what the future holds for the society under consideration. And we can tell what will NOT occur in a qualitatively different society where qualitatively different laws are in operation. For example, we can safely predict periodic unemployment of great masses of workers under capitalism. We can with equal sureness foresee jobs for all in the socialist society of the future.

The scientific approach, therefore, is to determine accurately the particular laws that hold for each society. Marx took the capitalist society which we live in as the

most important for us, and devoted his life to probing its laws of development. He held that a thorough knowledge of these laws would enable mankind to speed the time when it might transcend the limitations of capitalism. In fact, he was of the conviction that such knowledge is indispensable to win the abundance and freedom that will go with an international socialist order built on the achievements of capitalism.

It is for this reason that you will find no blueprints of the future society in the writings of Marx and Engels and other scientific socialists. Instead you find concentration on the "criticism" of the society we live in; that is, study of the contradictory patterns and forces impelling — or retarding — the evolution of capitalism toward a higher form of society. This, of course, is not an academic exercise. It yields the points of departure for socialist political activity.

Marx accomplished his principal work in "Capital." This mighty book is still to receive the recognition which Trotsky, for one, predicted it would ultimately get from the American workers. The fact that it deals with economics, a seemingly dry subject, is not currently in its favor. However, in our age, when adherents of the do-it-yourself school think nothing of getting into the high-voltage sections of their TV sets to clear up the hash on the screen, we can expect that in a period of economic and social crisis they will not hesitate to dip into this complex book to get a clearer picture of the society they live in.

"Capital" really deals with something much bigger than what generally goes for economics. It deals with man; but man in the travail of the capitalist system; man as shaped by the deepening contradiction between capital and labor. If we consider the book from this point of view, we can truthfully call the entire work a scientific treatise on population — what happened to the feudal population as capitalism arose, how and why it changed in the first stages of the new economic system, the alterations that occurred in Marx's time, and those that were clearly foreseeable. But let's settle for the chapter dealing most directly with the specific laws of population under capitalism, "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation."

Marx begins with the **organic composition** of capital, a concept that may seem somewhat remote from the current campaign to check the population of India by helping

poverty-stricken males to get themselves sterilized. The organic composition of capital is not something fixed; it changes. It is really the shift in value of **constant** and **variable** capital as this shift correlates with the changing **technical composition** of capital, which has two aspects, means of production and living labor power. "Hold on!" you say. All right, let's put it in Detroit.

When a plant is automated, a change occurs in the technical composition of capital — you can see it in the bigger and better machines, the increase in raw material being processed in a lot less time, and the relative decline in the number of workers on the line. Along with this, the value in plant and materials (constant capital) has gone up considerably, as the local press boasts, while the payroll (variable capital) has gone up but little, remained the same, or even dropped. So, as any stockholder can see — and who isn't a stockholder nowadays? — the organic composition of the company's capital, as indicated in the statement of assets and operating costs, is higher than that of a lot of competitors. Among the welcome consequences of this is a decline in wages relative to production that should react favorably on profits. Therefore it's a shrewd move to add some more shares of that stock to one's portfolio.

And the workers with families to take care of, who have been displaced by machines? Tell them about the Rev. Malthus and how the exploding population, to which they have thoughtlessly contributed, can lead to communism or worse.

It turns out that Marx's concepts are not so dry after all. But let's not get too far ahead of him.

'In the first stages of capitalism, the number of workers increases as capital grows, but at a somewhat slower rate than capital in view of the early opportunities the new system enjoys. The workers manage to maintain relatively good conditions. Nevertheless, the end result of their labor is always to increase capital, upon which they become more and more dependent. "Accumulation of capital is, therefore, increase of the proletariat," says Marx. This is the first main law of population as capitalism develops.

Marx cites some striking statements by the early classical economists, demonstrating how thoroughly they appreciated the advantages of a big population of poor people the better to give a privileged few ease and wealth.

For example, Bernard de Mandeville declared in 1728, "From what has been said, it is manifest, that, in a free nation, where slaves are not allowed of, the surest wealth consists in a multitude of laborious poor; for besides, that they are the never-failing nursery of fleets and armies, without them there could be no enjoyment, and no product of any country could be valuable."

As capital accumulates (Marx goes into this in some detail), the effect of the change in the organic composition of capital becomes more and more powerful. Say a capital at one time was 50% constant and 50% variable. Later it changes into 80% constant and 20% variable. Let's look at it in dollars. Say the original capital was \$6 million. It increases to \$18 million. Variable capital, originally \$3 million, goes up to \$3.6 million. That's an increase, all right, but note the difference in the two ratios. The payroll went up 20%, but to register that modest increase, the total capital had to triple in size!

Since Malthus gave us a lot of practice in handling ratios, we should not mind a lesson from Marx now on a ratio which every worker threatened by automation should find of special interest:

"With the advance of accumulation, therefore, the proportion of constant to variable capital changes. If it was originally say 1:1, it now becomes successively 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 7:1, etc., so that, as the capital increases, instead of 1/2 of its total value, only 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, 1/6, 1/8, etc., is transformed into labor-power, and, on the other hand 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 5/6, 7/8 into means of production. Since the demand for labor is determined not by the amount of capital as a whole, but by its variable constituent alone, that demand falls progressively with the increase of total capital . . ."

As we can see, this must modify the operation of the primary law about the proletariat increasing as capital is accumulated. What is the modification? The "greater attraction of laborers by capital is accompanied by their greater repulsion," that is, greater recruitment of workers is accompanied by greater unemployment.

"The laboring population therefore produces, along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, the means by which itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population; and it does this to an always increasing extent. This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production . . ."

Already we begin to see the real source of that "over-population" which gave the Rev. Malthus his chronic

anxiety. He was looking at one of the phenomena of capitalism. He simply made the error of believing it to be a natural phenomenon true of all times and all places.

When the neo-Malthusians advocate sterilization of the poor, particularly the masses of India, China, Africa and Latin America where the great majority happen to be colored, they prove themselves to be very short-sighted. To end this "overpopulation" would do untold damage to the capitalist system. Marx noted this trenchantly:

"But if a surplus laboring population is a necessary product of accumulation or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalistic accumulation, nay, a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms a disposable industrial reserve army, that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost."

Marx follows this observation with a most illuminating description of the periodicity of the expansion of capital, its ups and downs, its sudden retreats and its sudden expansion, all of which hinge on the possibility of throwing masses of workers into the ranks of the unemployed and then just as suddenly, when the opportunity arises, throwing them back into production. Anyone who recalls the sudden shift in the United States from the widespread unemployment of the thirties to the scramble for workers that occurred as the war industries moved into full production will appreciate the following passage from Marx:

"The mass of social wealth, overflowing with the advance of accumulation, and transformable into additional capital, thrusts itself frantically into old branches of production, whose market suddenly expands, or into newly formed branches, such as railways, etc., the need for which grows out of the development of the old ones. In all such cases, there must be the possibility of throwing great masses of men suddenly on the decisive points without injury to the scale of production in other spheres. Overpopulation supplies these masses."

To show how well the more thoughtful spokesmen of the capitalist class appreciated this function of overpopulation, Marx cites a statement by H. Merivale in 1841:

"Suppose that, on the occasion of some of these crises, the nation were to rouse itself to the effort of getting rid by emigration of some hundreds of thousands of superfluous arms, what would be the consequence? That, at the first returning demand for labor, there would be a deficiency. However rapid reproduction may be, it takes, at all events, the space of a generation to replace the loss of adult labor."

Now, the profits of our manufacturers depend mainly on the power of making use of the prosperous moment when demand is brisk, and thus compensating themselves for the interval during which it is slack. This power is secured to them only by the command of machinery and of manual labor. They must have hands ready by them, they must be able to increase the activity of their operations when required, and to slacken it again, according to the state of the market, or they cannot possibly maintain the pre-eminence in the race of competition on which the wealth of the country is founded."

Does that language sound a little musty, like it's from the grave where the defenders of capitalism bury Marx a thousand times a year? Maybe you've got a point. Here's the modern shape of things as depicted in an advertisement that appeared in the New York press the first week of March 1960. In behalf of the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company, the Madison Avenue hucksters printed a composite photograph of an eager-beaver, smiling worker stepping on a spoon held below a jar of instant coffee. They added this attention-grabbing headline, "Ever Hear of 'Instant People'?" The advertisement continues:

"To the firm looking for a new plant site, 'Instant People' means an immediate source of skilled and semi-skilled labor and, in Central Eastern Pennsylvania, you'll find all the honest and conscientious manpower you want!

"Just as a starter, check the available labor list shown to the right for four communities in Central Eastern Pennsylvania.

"It's only a sample of the experienced heavy industry men . . . local people, not transients . . . who can set your lathes turning and wheels spinning the day you flip the first switch!

"Add 'instant' shell buildings . . . they're brand-new, ready and waiting, at unbelievably low cost . . . to the picture and you can see Central Eastern Pennsylvania has everything to put your business in business, right in the 'Heart of the Market.' Let us show you why!"

Isn't it really more satisfying to let Marx show us why? Suppose we try to follow his analysis further as he probes deeper into what happens to the working population upon the widening of the ratio between constant and variable capital.

Marx shows that an increased payroll can set more labor in action without increasing the number of jobs, or that a payroll of the same size can set more labor in action with the same number of workers on the line, or finally it can displace skilled labor-power by unskilled. Rapid as

technological change is under capitalism, the production of a relative surplus population is even faster.

"The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure that the latter by its competition exerts on the former, forces these to submit to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the overwork of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists, and accelerates at the same time the production of the industrial reserve army on a scale corresponding with the advance of social accumulation."

Doesn't that sound as if it were written today about Detroit or Pittsburgh or the garment area of New York? Marx describes the various forms of the relative surplus population: the "acute" form during a depression; the "chronic" form during dull times; three permanent forms, "the floating, the latent, the stagnant." These include graduates of the youth brigades in the automatic factories who float from job to job, agricultural workers on the verge of being forced into plants, the irregularly employed who are found especially in decaying branches of industry.

Finally, the relative surplus population includes the paupers. Excluding the vagabonds, criminals, and prostitutes, Marx notes three types: First, those able to work but unable to find jobs. Second, orphans and pauper children. "Third, the demoralized and ragged, and those unable to work, chiefly people who succumb to their incapacity for adaptation, due to the division of labor; people who have passed the normal age of the laborer, the victims of industry, whose number increases with the increase of dangerous machinery, of mines, chemical works, etc., the mutilated, the sickly, the widows, etc."

Where in all the countless writings of the Malthusians, since the first tract in 1798, can you find a description like that of the anatomy of the surplus population? Was Marx accurate or not? It should prove instructive to hear something from the Malthusians on this — if they can leave off reciting that famous riddle about the arithmetical progression of bacon and eggs and geometrical progression of babies.

While waiting for a reply, let's continue reading Marx. He ridicules the "economic wisdom" that tells workers they should accommodate "their number to the requirements of capital." They don't need to accommodate their number.

It's done for them by the mechanism of capitalist production and accumulation:

"The law by which a constantly increasing quantity of means of production, thanks to the advance in the productiveness of social labor, may be set in movement by a progressively diminishing expenditure of human power, this law, in a capitalist society — where the laborer does not employ the means of production, but the means of production employ the laborer — undergoes a complete inversion and is expressed thus: the higher the productiveness of labor, the greater is the pressure of the laborers on the means of employment, the more precarious, therefore, becomes their condition of existence, viz., the sale of their own labor power for the increasing of another's wealth, or for the self-expansion of capital. The fact that the means of production, and the productiveness of labor, increase more rapidly than the productive population, expresses itself, therefore, capitalistically in the inverse form that the laboring population always increases more rapidly than the conditions under which capital can employ this increase for its own self-expansion."

Does this still sound a little remote? Perhaps too much like the difficult language you might encounter in an advanced treatise on physics or some other science? Marx follows with some seventy pages of illustrations of the operation of the laws of population under capitalism. These pages constitute one of the most vivid exposures ever printed in the literature of protest and rebellion. To this day it remains one of the great models of socialist journalism at its very best. If you have never read "Capital" and you want an easy beginning, these pages are to be highly recommended. Marx listed them as Section 5 of his Chapter, "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation."

Let us, however, supply a modern example to supplement Marx's illustrations of how the capitalist laws of population operate.

From government statistics we learn that the average yearly employment of coal miners in 1920 was 784,621. By 1930 it was 644,006. In 1940 the figure had dropped to 530,588. In 1950 it was 488,206. The estimate for 1960 is some 200,000.

Why this terrific decline in the number of coal miners? What happened to them? If we were to apply the Malthusian assumption in full strictness, we would have no choice but to conclude that they must have reproduced too fast for their food supply and so famine decimated their ranks. Fortunately the rest of us don't have to worry about any lack of coal because of this tragedy. The increase of

Labor productivity in the coal mines has been sufficient to keep the country supplied with more than it needs. Moreover, the surviving coal miners are not the worst paid workers in the country, their average weekly earnings being \$118.70 with probably the best fringe benefits in the country. Yet the actual labor costs of coal per ton today are lower than they were ten years ago. How is this to be explained? Here is what Joseph A. Loftus says in the Jan. 11, 1960, New York Times:

"This is possible because the output rate per man has approximately doubled in the last ten years. The 1958 average was 11.33 tons a man-day."

Loftus indicates what is behind this great and continuing rise in productivity:

"The Pittston Company, for example, expects that in 1960 its Moss No. 3 mine in Southwest Virginia will produce forty-five tons a man-day."

"The Pittston Company invested about \$30,000,000 in this modern mine, which includes a factory-type plant that dries, cleans and sizes 25,000 tons of coal a day with push-button controls."

"Productivity of European mines is said to be still below two tons a man-day. . . ."

"The Peabody Coal Company strip mine near Freeburg, Ill., gets at the coal from the top with a huge power shovel. It takes a 105-ton bite of earth and rock overburden every forty-five seconds and dumps it a block away."

How do the coal miners feel about the spectacular decline in jobs? Loftus quotes John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, who, incidentally, is a firm believer in the capitalist system and a sterling anticommunist. Lewis reports for the miners:

"They understand the need for it. It has not been a social revolution of any magnitude. When men are laid off, the men in the younger age brackets move into other industries. [They join the "floating" section of the surplus population; the older ones join the "stagnant" or the "pauper" sections in the desolated towns around the coal shafts.]

"Some of the older men stay in the area and manage to get along with the help of relatives. Or they find other employment. There is public assistance and Social Security assistance in some cases. [Isn't that "some" a sensitive touch?] Pensions from the welfare fund help those who are over 60 years of age. There is a natural attribution [attribution?] of manpower, too. [That is, some die.]"

As a fitting comment on what has happened in the coal industry, let me cite Loftus, who has a truly capitalist appreciation of the trend:

"The central factor in this amazing story is productivity. While many industries bewail rising labor costs, rigid working rules, and the failure of the output rate to rise fast enough to meet the threat of foreign competition, the bituminous industry is the envy of the world."

A "Man-made Plague"

Marxist analysis has shown us that when we speak of "overpopulation" in capitalist society we must add a most important qualification. It is "relative." Not relative to the food supply, as the naive Rev. Malthus believed, but relative to the part of investment that goes by the attractive name of "payroll." The size of the payroll, as everyone knows, is only partially determined by common human needs. The capitalist, a devoutly religious man, leaves the final say on payroll matters to his god, Profits, the Moloch to whom he piously offers the flesh and bone of his workers.

That is why an "overpopulation" of millions can appear in a few short months in a country as wealthy as the United States, flooding the employment offices, and just as suddenly disappear when the economic cycle enters a period of boom.

The real meaning of "overpopulation" can be seen with exceptional clarity in colonial or semicolonial countries whose economies have been molded by imperialist interests. Cuba offers a good example.

When he was tried for leading an unsuccessful revolt against the Batista dictatorship in 1953, just before his twenty-seventh birthday, Dr. Fidel Castro gave the following eloquent description of the Cubans whom he sought to arouse. It is worth studying for the picture it offers of the kind of people the Malthusians are talking about when they advocate an intensive campaign to persuade the world's "overpopulation" to get themselves sterilized.

"When we speak of people, we do not mean the well-to-do, conservative segments of the nation always ready to reap some advantages from any regime of oppression, from any dictatorship, and from despotism, kneeling down, if need be, before the master in turn. . . .

"When we speak of battle and refer to the people, we mean the 600,000 Cubans who are out of work and who want to earn an honest living here instead of having to emigrate in search of a better opportunity.

"We mean the 500,000 farm workers who live in miserable huts, working four months and going hungry with their children the rest of the year, with not an inch of land to farm,

and whose existence would move to compassion were it not for so many stone-hearted.

"By people we mean the 400,000 industrial workers and laborers whose retirement funds have been robbed, and from whom all benefits are being taken away, whose housing consists of single rooms in tenement houses, whose salaries go from the hands of the employer to those of the money lender, whose future is a cut in wages and dismissal, whose life is one of never-ending work, and whose only hope for rest lies in the grave.

"By people we mean the 100,000 share croppers who live and die working a land that is not theirs, contemplating it as Moses did the Promised Land, only to die before managing to own it and, like feudal slaves, having to pay for the use of that land with a large part of the crop, and who can neither love that land nor improve it or beautify it by planting a cedar or an orange tree, because they know not when the bailiff will come around with the rural guard to tell them they must leave.

"By people we mean the 30,000 self-sacrificing teachers and professors, so indispensable for the better destiny of future generations, who are so badly treated and poorly paid.

"By people we mean the 20,000 debt-ridden small merchants, ruined by the economic crisis and to whom venal public officials are dealing the finishing blow.

"By people we mean the 10,000 young professionals: doctors, engineers, lawyers, veterinarians, dentists, teachers, pharmacists, journalists, painters, sculptors, etc., who leave the universities with their degrees willing to fight for a living and full of hopes only to find themselves in a dead-end alley, with all doors closed to their clamor and pleas.

"Those are the ones I call people, those are the ones I mean when I say people, the ones that suffer all the misfortunes and because of it are capable of fighting courageously!"

If we extract from that description the figures on the basic labor force, we see that out of 1,600,000 industrial and agricultural workers and sharecroppers, more than one-third were totally unemployed while almost another third were unemployed eight months of the year. Is it hard to understand why they finally undertook a revolution?

To round out the picture, we should of course take into consideration the fact that this large "overpopulation" in Cuba was a great convenience to the American sugar interests. They paid four months wages to a skilled and highly industrious labor force and then put those hundreds of thousands of workers into mothballs for the next eight months. During those months, the "dead time," the Cubans could not even work at their own crops, for they were denied access to the land although much of it was uncultivated.

tivated. So they starved. And this on a fertile tropical island easily capable of feeding a population many times larger!

Cuba is not exceptional. Ours is a hungry planet. Here are some suggestive figures from an editorial in the Dec. 14, 1959, Christian Science Monitor:

"There are now about 2,850,000,000 persons on our planet. Only about 1,600,000,000 of them are adequately fed. That means that almost seven times as many people as there are in the entire United States go to bed hungry every night. Of the 90,000,000 children born this year, more than half are not being adequately fed.

"In parts of South Asia children eat only two meals a day, and sometimes skip days before the next food comes in. In India 25 per cent of the population is without housing. A street or the field is their only address."

Going to bed hungry is, naturally, a good thing from the Malthusian point of view. It reminds you of the need to practice continence so that the world's population won't outweigh the earth by the year 4460 A.D.

In his excellent book, "The Geography of Hunger," Josue de Castro lays the blame for the world's endemic hunger exactly where it belongs:

"Hunger has been chiefly created by the inhuman exploitation of colonial riches, by the latifundia and one-crop culture which lay waste the colony, so that the exploiting country can take too cheaply the raw materials its prosperous industrial economy requires. For economic reasons misery was hidden from the world's eyes; tragedies like that of China, where in the nineteenth century some hundred million individuals starved to death, or like that of India, where twenty million people died of hunger in the last thirty years of the century, were glossed over."

De Castro includes vitamin deficiencies in his survey of hunger, saying about this:

"The feudal, slave regime of southern agriculture, based on the monoculture of cotton, implanted pellagra in this region of the United States just as the monoculture of sugar planted vitamin hunger along with the cane in certain of the Antilles, and as the mono-exploitation of rubber brought beriberi to the Amazon basin. In each of these cases, hunger has been cultivated by man himself; it has arisen as a man-made plague."

The Malthusians are fond of pointing to South America as a prime example of abysmal poverty and hunger due to an "exploding" population. De Castro indicates the true story:

"The prevailing starvation in South America is a direct consequence of the continent's historical past. This history

is one of colonial exploitation along mercantile lines. It developed through successive economic cycles the effect of which was to destroy, or at least upset, the economic integrity of the continent. There were the cycle of gold, the cycle of sugar, the cycle of precious stones, the cycle of coffee, the cycle of rubber, the cycle of oil. And during the course of each of these cycles, one finds a whole region giving itself up entirely to the monoculture, or mono-exploitation, of a single product—at the same time forgetting everything else, and thus wasting natural wealth and neglecting the potentialities of regional food supply.

"The one-crop culture of cane sugar in the Brazilian northeast is a good example. This area once had one of the few really fertile tropical soils. It had a climate favorable to agriculture, and it was originally covered with a forest growth extremely rich in fruit trees. Today, the all-absorbing, self-destructive sugar industry has stripped all the available land and covered it completely with sugar cane; as a result this is one of the starvation areas of the continent."

Imperialism has plundered our planet, annihilated entire populations, condemned hundreds of millions of human beings to death by starvation and doomed the majority of mankind today to chronic hunger. As De Castro shows in his book, not even the American people with the highest standard of living in the world have escaped the ravages of this ruthless economic system.

Robert J. Lampman, economics professor at the University of Wisconsin, recently made a study indicating how widespread poverty actually is in the United States today. In the Dec. 26, 1959, issue of Labor, weekly newspaper of the railroad unions, we find the following summary of his findings:

"Using official figures, Lampman found that in 1957 fully 19 per cent of all Americans had poverty incomes. He defined such income as \$2,500 a year or less (at 1957 prices) for a family of four — and correspondingly less or more for smaller or larger families. For a family of two, for example, the poverty income level would be \$1,638 or less a year.

"Thus, nearly a fifth of all Americans live in deep poverty. In addition, Lampman found, 30 million more live on the fringe of poverty — making less than enough to maintain modest but 'adequate' living standards.

"This minimum 'adequate' income is officially estimated at \$4,000 a year (at 1957 prices) for a family of four. In 1957, Lampman found, 36 per cent of all Americans — 62,000,000 people — had less than this minimum 'adequate' income."

If the Malthusian theory is correct, there's another 62,000,000 people who should be persuaded to get themselves sterilized for the sake of elbow room on our planet 2,000 years from now.

Hunger Disappears in World of Future

The Malthusian theory reduces man to little more than a gullet and a set of reproductive organs. Viewing food sources as relatively fixed, the Malthusian sees no way of assuring gullets of the future their wherewithal unless today's reproductive organs are neutered in one way or another. The supply of gullets must be kept in balance with the supply of roast beef and apple pie — otherwise the world will go communist. The Malthusian program can thus be stated in a single sentence:

For the sterilization of human beings, especially the colored ones in colonial areas!

We can see why such a program appeals to those who depend on stocks, bonds, rents and interest for their livelihood. It comes natural in these circles to agree that parasites must be unintelligent to multiply faster than their source of nutrition.

Marxists take a decidedly different view of humanity. They note that man has hands and a brain, the capacity to use tools and an inclination for teamwork. These have made him, in distinction to all other animals, a food **producer**. This is the secret of mankind's conquest of the earth, a conquest that would remain an impenetrable mystery if we were to confine ourselves to Malthusian concepts. (Where did these expanding numbers get their food?)

In remote antiquity, when human beings were only food gatherers, hunger was to be expected. Even after shifting from hunting to stock raising and culture of plants, famine remained an ever-present threat due to the low technological level. In today's world, hunger is completely abnormal. Humanity can **produce** all it needs and many times over. Moreover, man's capacity to increase his food supply expands with the increase in population and at an ever higher rate than population growth. A big population is an asset, not a liability. Failure to see this rather obvious fact is the basic flaw in the Malthusian argument.

The truth is that the world now has at its disposal more than sufficient means to rapidly eliminate the hunger and poverty inherited from past ages. The same means, rationally developed, could soon assure everyone on this planet a decent living. Luxury for all, including abundant leisure time, could be realized within relatively few years.

These means are not a recent acquisition like the

capacity to make Sputniks, intercontinental rockets and H-bombs. We have had the means to end hunger since at least 1914, if not some time before.

Does that sound startling? Not so long ago it was considered rather obvious. The years of McCarthyism, of screaming about the "communist menace," of teaching the most sordid careerism and cynicism to our youth have brought a great relapse in social awareness. We have to relearn some painful lessons.

Let's begin with the wealth and manpower wasted in World War I. Imagine those millions of men taken from the trenches and put to work in the plants and mills and farms for peacetime production. Add the efforts of those behind the lines who were turning out guns and bullets and tanks and high explosives. Bring in as shock troops on the peacetime front the millions who lost their lives in the imperialist conflict. On top of this include what could have been done with the means of production that were wiped out.

When you have finished visualizing how those mighty forces could have advanced civilization, please repeat it — on the far greater scale of World War II.

Finally add all the waste effort going into preparations for World War III. Since Truman dropped the first atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the U.S. alone has been spending some \$40,000,000,000 a year on "Operation Nuclear Annihilation."

Suppose that the trillions spent in the past half century to destroy the flower of humanity and the wealth accumulated by generations had been wisely invested in schools and hospitals and homes, in mines and mills, farms and factories, highways and railroads, ships and ports, wouldn't ours now be a world of boundless abundance? Who can doubt it!

If you really stop to think about it, considerations as powerful as these are not needed to show that we have the means to end poverty quite rapidly. Simply consider where we would be today had all the factories that were closed down in depressions and recessions in the past half century been run at top capacity. Or consider how much farther ahead we would be if we had eliminated the useless duplication and appalling waste due to blind competition. Or if the billions of dollars spent in idiotic advertising were put to useful purpose. Consider how much more

productive our economy would be if the standing armies were eliminated, the swollen government bureaucracies trimmed down, and the millions of people wasting their lives in these pursuits were given worthwhile occupations.

The parasitic way of life to which our rulers are accustomed is another costly item worth examining, but far more important is their habitual policy of blocking basic industry from running at full capacity. Most injurious of all is the barrier deliberately created by the monopolies to expanding our industries at the rate the needs of the people call for. If our industries were just turned loose, this alone would quickly give us such wealth, provided it were properly distributed, as to make hunger and poverty a thing of the past.

All right, many voices among the younger generation will reply; all this was not our responsibility. Our parents and grandparents failed to meet the obligations of their time. But our generation can correct all this. We can end the capitalist nightmare and assure the victory of socialism. We will do everything in our power to arouse our generation to its great responsibility and its unparalleled opportunity. Still we are not sure about the food supply after we win.

Let us suppose then that America has gone socialist. The victory in the U.S.A. was sufficient to knock the pins out from capitalism in the rest of the world; and the Soviet workers carried through the restoration of proletarian democracy in their area. Economic rivalries and national hatreds have been displaced by their opposites — economic collaboration and the brotherhood of man. The best minds of all countries have assembled to work out preliminary plans for a joint effort of all peoples to make this earth really habitable.

What about the food supply? We can imagine the delegates from Africa and South America reporting that if only 20 per cent of the land reserves in those continents are counted, 900,000,000 more acres are immediately available for cultivation. The delegates from Oceania report another 100,000,000 acres available in their area. The Russians and Canadians might report another 300,000,000 acres available if only 10 per cent of their subpolar soils are brought into production. This would increase the world's cultivated area to some 3,000,000,000 acres, leaving another possible 5,000,000,000 acres for further exploration and

development.

What would the U.S. delegates say? Perhaps something like this: "Under capitalism we exhausted 100,000,000 acres of virgin soil in less than two centuries. However, our scientists are convinced that we can restore this. Naturally, we're putting back into production the 22,500,000 acres of fertile soil that were withdrawn in the old 'soil bank.' Also, of course, we are making available immediately \$9,000,000,000 in corn and wheat and we don't know how much butter and canned stuff, stored in caves by the old government, that may still prove edible. And our farmers are saying that now that they are free to really start farming, they're going to break all the old records in producing food."

On this basis a population of 28,000,000,000 — ten times the present figure — could be fed comfortably even on the basis of old techniques.

However, the world's best scientists might bring in a preliminary report on some stirring possibilities. "Since we no longer have to waste our talents on producing fiendish things like H-bombs, nerve gases and self-guiding rocket missiles, we can now turn our attention to what we have long wanted to do. Already we see immense potentialities in farming the sea — not to mention extracting minerals and metals from it. In addition we know from rather primitive experiments carried out in capitalist days, that hydroponics may prove to be one of our best bets; we can grow bigger, tastier and more nutritious fruits and vegetables in tanks than in soil, and we can use artificial light. All this, of course, constitutes only transitional measures. The future points to synthetic foods; and laboratory reports already indicate startling gains in this direction."

We can see some of the world's top engineers and technicians impatiently waiting to report on the tools and machines available to mankind. In an advance release they state that it will prove sobering to discover how much of our plant equipment is obsolete but that even here the virtues of rational planning will become evident. Machines that would be junked in the race for profits under capitalism can be saved for many years of almost cost-free service while fully automated plants are built in great complexes.

Will sufficient power be available for such ambitious projects? That will no doubt get a laugh. "Power! That used to be a Malthusian bugaboo. The discovery of atomic energy knocked that one out. Besides we have enormous

resources in the tides and in solar radiation which remained untapped under capitalism. Even water power is still to be fully developed. We propose to save our fossil fuels for much more fruitful use than burning them up the way they did in the days of capitalist savagery."

Our conservationists will take their place, too, under the batteries of TV cameras as the world listens to this historic conference. They will discuss plans for restoring our streams and lakes to the crystalline purity that was taken for granted before capitalism converted them into sewers and cesspools. And representatives of the health departments of our great metropolitan centers will discuss the quickest means to end pollution of the air we breathe.

What will be the most important resource of all to be considered? Why people of course. Our labor force. The active ingredient in the great overall plan to tie the world economy together in a scientific way. Most amazing of all the changes will be the approach to this resource. Under capitalism, the labor force got least consideration of all the components in the factory system. In fact, although it was clearly the source of profits, the capitalists generally approached labor as The Enemy.

"Now this has been completely revolutionized," we can hear them say. "The profitability of an undertaking is approached as a bookkeeping figure, of interest only as it might affect the new aim of production — the welfare of humanity.

"Every aspect of the labor force is now of first concern, from its care in prenatal stage to the days of final achievement in old age. New educational needs, multiplicity of skills and tasks demanded in the next years, health, leisure opportunities, general participation in physical labor, administration, exploration in science and the development of the arts — all of these topics are to be weighed now in determining the first great goals for all mankind to unite upon."

The conference will not go beyond a preliminary inventory and first approximation of aims, it is true; but what a dividing line it will mark from the past. The mass of humanity will get its first true estimate of itself as a living force. Won't they laugh at such a simple problem as liquidating poverty and hunger? What will really interest them is the mighty challenge of building a truly human civilization on this earth.

Will the size of the labor force be a question of importance? Undoubtedly it will. Most likely when the world pool of manpower is carefully studied, it will be found small in relation to the task of cleaning up the untidy mess left by capitalism; and certainly it will be regarded as only a pioneer band in building the bright new system of socialism, a society that will eventually mobilize the collective effort of tens of billions of human beings.

Some of the leaders of the Chinese people, after they had kicked out the Chiang dictatorship, made the mistake of thinking they had too many people. In 1956 they even put on an intensive birth-control campaign — not just to disseminate the elemental information everyone is entitled to know and use, but as a government drive to lower the birth rate. Then as their economic planning began to gather momentum they were surprised by labor shortages. That was in the most populous country on earth.

"All right," some half-Malthusian may still argue, "but eventually the size of population **will** become a problem. What then?"

Is it our job to attempt to solve problems that belong to a future generation in a society qualitatively different from ours? Or to let ourselves be diverted by speculation on how such things will be worked out by our descendants? We will do all right if we succeed in solving the problem of our time — the relatively simple problem facing our generation of bringing order and planning into the world's economic system.

Frederick Engels had something to say on this in a letter to Karl Kautsky, Feb. 1, 1881. His wise observation is still pertinent:

"There is, of course, the abstract possibility that the number of people will become so great that limits will have to be set to their increase. But if at some stage communist society finds itself obliged to regulate the production of human beings, just as it has already come to regulate the production of things, it will be precisely this society, and this society alone, which can carry this out without difficulty. It does not seem to me that it would be at all difficult in such a society to achieve by planning a result which has already been produced spontaneously, without planning, in France and Lower Austria. At any rate, it is for the people in the communist society themselves to decide whether, when, and how this is to be done, and what means they wish to employ for the purpose. I do not feel called upon to make proposals or give them advice about it. These people, in any case, will surely not be any less intelligent than we are."

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

On Socialism and the Labor Movement

by Leon Trotsky

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| The Revolution Betrayed | paper \$2.00 cloth \$ 3.00 |
| The History of the Russian Revolution | 12.50 |
| Trotsky's Diary in Exile: 1935 | 4.00 |
| Stalin's Frame-Up System and the Moscow Trials | 1.00 |
| Marxism in the U.S. | .35 |
| The Death Agony of Capitalism (Transitional Program) | .25 |
| If America Should Go Communist | .25 |

by James P. Cannon

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| The History of American Trotskyism | cloth \$2 .75 |
| Notebook of an Agitator | cloth \$4.00 paper 2.50 |
| Socialism on Trial | .50 |
| America's Road To Socialism | .35 |
| The Road to Peace | .25 |
| The I.W.W. — The Great Anticipation | .25 |
| Eugene V. Debs (The Debs Centennial) | .25 |
| Socialism and Democracy | .15 |
| The Coming American Revolution | .10 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Socialist Workers Party (What it is — What it Stands For) by Joseph Hansen | .25 |
| The Long View of History by William F. Warde | .35 |
| The Irregular Movement of History by William F. Warde | .25 |

PIONEER PUBLISHERS

116 University Place, New York 3, N. Y.

Write for a free copy of our complete listing